TERRORISM - 1936 - 1937.

During the rebellion of 1936 terrorism was intensive and widespread, every part of the country being affected by it in one way or another. In 1937 it was not so widespread, but from time to time outrages of the most brutal nature were committed in different parts of the country. The most intensive campaigns were those carried on in Haifa and Nazareth areas in the first quarter of the year, and in the last quarter in Jerusalem, Haifa and Nazareth areas, after the flight of Haj Amin Husseini following on his dismissal from office on the 15th of October. The terrorist campaign in 1937 was accompanied, particularly in the last quarter, by a campaign of sabotage mainly of telephone and railway lines.

Appendix "A" is a Summary of terrorist crime and sabotage committed during 1937 and during 1938 to date.

During 1937 violent and intensive campaigns of reprisal were carried out intermittently by Jews on Arabs, the victims in every case being peasants and labourers and townsmen of the poorest class. The most violent of these campaigns were those of mid-March when 1 Arab was killed and 17 were wounded, and in September, October and November when 12 Arabs were murdered by Jewish gunmen. A List of these cases is set out in Appendix "B".

Appendix "C" is a summary of the casualties resulting from crimes of violence against the person during 1937 and during 1938 to date.

Appendix "D" is a detailed list of assassinations committed by Arabs from the 1st of January, 1937, to date.

RURAL GANG ACTIVITIES.

Throughout 1937 gangs were active in the rural areas of the Haifa, Nazareth, Nablus and Jerusalem Districts. Gang activity in the rural areas of Southern District was comparatively insignificant. The gangs ranged in strength from 6 men to 100 and their activities extended from highway robbery to open battles with troops, police and aircraft.

Details of outstanding examples of rural gang activity during 1937 and during 1938 to date, are set out in Appendix "E".

In January, 1937, Police patrols in Nablus District encountered two gangs of highway robbers killing one member of each gang. In December, Military and Police working in cooperation destroyed a number of large gangs in the Nazareth and Tulkarm areas. On 31.1.38, aircraft and troops engaged a strong gang in the Jenin area near Umm el Fahm and caused a number of casualties to it.

RECENT GANG ACTIVITY.

In October, 1937, gangs of armed men began to make nocturnal visits to villages in Acre area. These gangs announced that they were the forerunners of stronger and more numerous gangs of holy fighters

that would soon come to Palestine to fight against the infidels.

The villagers, as a whole, were hostile to these visitors and in one case at least they are reliably reported to have driven the gangsters out of the village. There is little doubt, however, that a number of recruits were enrolled from amongst the more pious, the more lawless minded and the more venturesome of the peasants. The gangs were led by local criminals wanted for serious crimes, who had been absent in Syria during the summer. On account of the local connections of these gang leaders they were able to find friends and sustenance notwithstanding the generally hostile attitude adopted towards them by the villagers.

The more noteworthy of these gang leaders are:-

Sheikh Attiyeh Ahmed,
Abdulla Asbah,
Mahmoud Mohammed Salem.
Sheikh Yousef Said Abu Durra,
Sheikh Khalil Eisa,
Fawzi Rashid. ?

On the first appearance of these gangs, a force of 50 mounted Police under a senior British Police Officer was organised to search for them. Later a unit of the Transjordan Frontier Force was detached to assist in the search and in mid-December this unit established contact with a large concentration of armed men near Nazareth.

The concentration was temporarily broken up with some casualties to the gang, but some days later it was found that the gang had re-formed and was in hiding near Tiberias. On Christmas Day the gang was again attacked and on this occasion seventeen members of it were killed. Since then large concentrations of armed men have not made their appearance in the Nazareth District, but a number of small gangs have been active in the area and some serious outrages have been committed by them. Meanwhile, in mid-December, another large gang had made its appearance near Tulkarm, under a man named Abdel Rahim Haj Mohamed, a fugitive of the 1936 rebellion. This gang was soon located and broken up, four members of it being killed.

In the Hebron area a gang, under an escaped convict named Issa Battat, has been active since October and a number of serious crimes have been committed by it.

The position as regards rural gangs at the end of February is that a few gangs of armed men ranging in strength from 6 men to 50 are active in the Nablus, Nazareth and Hebron areas. In the Nablus area there is evidence that the gangs are under the direction of Sheikh Attiyeh Ahmed and that the villagers are being terrorised by them into giving them food, shelter and recruits. These gangs are most mobile and their tactics are to avoid engagement except when, and for so long, as circumstances are greatly in their favour. After an engagement they break up and scatter, to re-form later at a pre-arranged spot.

The following is a brief history of the Terrorist Movement in Palestine.

Following upon the riots of 1929, feeling between Jew and Arab was very bitter. The riots had produced an aftermath of intense racial hatred and the idea of exciting the Arab populace to armed rebellion soon began to be given practical expression though in a small way. A gang calling itself the Green Hand Gang commenced to move about in the Acre-Safad-Nazareth area towards the end of 1929. A man called Ahmed Tafish of Safad, and a Druze called Fuad Alami, alias Lebnani, led it. This gang consisted of some 20 persons, all of whom were armed. Tafish was wanted for murder committed in Safad during the 1929 riots and Lebnani was wanted by the Syrian Government for various serious crimes. The gang went from village to village and collected money "for the national cause" as they put it. The members also claimed to be Mujahideen or religious fighters, but, though the villagers were prepared to feed the gang and give contributions in the form of money they were not prepared to go further, and only the more fanatically-minded villagers regarded them as "holy fighters".

The Green Hand gang was destroyed in the Spring of 1930.

The Green Hand gang was believed to have a strong moral and material backing from amongst the

directors and members of the recently formed Young Men's Moslem Association - a society founded by religious heads throughout the country under the patronage of the Mufti of Jerusalem - Haj Amin Effendi Husseini. The declared rules and objects of this society were innocuous, but from time to time during subsequent years, it was found that individual branches were engaged in subversive activity. The branches concerned were accordingly closed down by order of Government, but there is no doubt that a good deal of subversive activity of an underground nature continued to be carried on, not only by the members of the proscribed branches, but by other branches against which no definite evidence was available.

2. The most ardent branches of the Young Men's Moslem Association were those around Haifa and Nazareth and Jenin. These branches had a stronger religious bias than those elsewhere. They were kept well organised, and meetings of the members and Committees were held regularly. At the meetings lectures would be given by preachers selected for their fanatical interpretation of the Koran. The most fanatical and militant of all these preachers was Sheikh Izzedin Kassem.